



THIS WEEK IN IRAQ

The Official Newsletter of the Multi-National Force - Iraq

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Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2008

Odierno Assumes Command

CAMP VICTORY — Army Gen. Ray Odierno assumed command of Multi-National Force-Iraq from Army Gen. David H. Petraeus during a ceremony at al Faw Palace here Sept. 16.

The change of command occurs after incredible progress in the country, said Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, who traveled to Baghdad to participate in the ceremony.

“When General Petraeus took charge 18 months ago, darkness had descended on this land,” the secretary said. “Merchants of chaos were gaining strength. Death was commonplace. Around the world, questions mounted about whether a new strategy – or any strategy, for that matter – could make a real difference.”

Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted that a national intelligence estimate in January 2007 doubted whether Iraq could reconcile over 18 months.

“Here we are, 18 months later, and Iraq is a vastly different place,” Mullen said during the ceremony.

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U.S. Army General Ray Odierno takes the flag and assumes command of Multi-National Force - Iraq from U.S. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates during the MNF-I change of command, Camp Victory, Iraq, Sept. 16, 2008. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jerry Morrison.

This Week in News ...

Iraqis Take Control of Combat Outpost

Hundreds Graduate Advanced Training

Micro-Grants Boost Baghdad Furniture Market



Press Conference: Lt. Gen. Helmick, Mr. al-Qadir

Reconstruction Report: The Latest from USACE.

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BEIDHA'A — “At first, when we would come to the market, people just stared at us,” said Spc. Jose Perez, originally from Orlando, Fla., and now a driver with Team Steel's Red Platoon, “and I think they just weren't used to us being here.”

In late February 2008, Perez and his platoon conducted an initial reconnaissance of a furniture market, located on the southeast side of Beidha'a neighborhood in northern Baghdad, with the intent of determining its viability for future rehabilitation.

What they found was a disappointing level of unemployment, dirty streets

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An Iraqi Policeman mans a machine gun at a checkpoint in the Salhiya District of Baghdad, Sept. 10, 2008. Salhiya was the first district in Baghdad to transfer its checkpoints from Iraqi Army to IP. Photo by Sgt. Daniel Blottenberger, 18th Military Police Brigade.

Iraqi Police Defend Checkpoints

BAGHDAD — A large Iraqi security force (ISF) convoy, which included several Iraqi Army Humvees, exited the international zone in Baghdad at midday, Sept. 10, 2008.

At the front and back of the convoy was an Iraqi Police (IP) patrol vehicle providing escort security for the convoy.

“That says something in itself,” said Capt. Nathan Brookshire, a Military Police commander, while viewing the long line of Humvees exiting the international zone. “Iraqi Police pulling security for an Iraqi Army convoy, you don’t see that every day.”

At least you don’t in Baghdad, where until recent months the local populace security was provided by the Iraqi Army.

Now Iraqi Police are continuing the transition of becoming the primary ISF in Baghdad by taking over at checkpoints to provide the first line of security for the

citizens here.

In recent months the process of turning all Iraqi Army manned checkpoints over to the IP has been very successful.

The Salhiya District is the first of the Baghdad districts to have all of its checkpoints turned over to IP control.

There are many key terrain features in the Salhiya District, which makes it an important district in the overall security of Baghdad. One of these landmarks is the Seik Railway, which is Iraq’s main railway that runs from Mosul to Basra.

“The trains have been running successfully for about a year now,” said Capt. William Macugay, Multi-National Division - Baghdad.

Aside from Salhiya, the transition continues to spread throughout Baghdad.

“Within the next year I predict we will have all of Baghdad transitioned to IP

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Al-Anbar Successes Validate Iraq Security Approach

WASHINGTON — When security responsibility for Iraq’s Anbar province was turned over to the Iraqi government this month, it validated the security model that has been applied throughout the country, a Coalition spokesman said Sept. 11.

Successful coordination of a surge in U.S. forces, the emergence of the Awakening movement, and political movement by the Iraqi government resulted in the weakening of the al Qaida in Iraq terrorist network into a more containable scattering of individual cells, said Rear Adm. Patrick Driscoll, director of strategic communications, Multi-National Force - Iraq.

Anbar province, Driscoll said, is “now kind of the model for how Iraqis have made the transition from really chasing al Qaida out of the cities and main areas and putting them on the run.”

The next steps in the process for Anbar residents involve embracing the political process and focusing on reconstruction and restoration of essential services, Driscoll said.

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Moments in Time: Still Images from the Military’s Best Photographers



An eastern Baghdad fruit and vegetable stand, Sep. 6, 2008. Photo by Staff Sgt. Brian Lehnhardt.



Three Iraqi boys watch U.S. Soldiers in Qara Qosh, Iraq, Sept. 4, 2008. Photo by Pfc. Sarah DeBoise.



Iraqi boys enjoy a potato sack race during a recent Marine Corps-sponsored field meet. Photo by Marine Cpl. Billy Hall.